

**"Now what
would a little girl
do with a canoe?"**

Just My Size

By Pam Calvert

"What are you making, Tata?" Dikike asked her father. "A little boat?" She eyed the small canoe and said, "It looks just my size."

Dikike's father laughed and said, "Now what would a little girl do with a canoe?"

Dikike thought for a moment. "I could ride out into the lagoon and hunt for clams."

Tata shook his head with a smile. "Don't you want to help your mother make a pandanus mat for the canoe?"

* Chamorro people live on the island of Guam, in the western Pacific. The Chamorros call their island *Guahan*. It means "we have."

Dikike looked over at her mother weaving the long, green leaves of the pandanus tree. Dikike had made mats before. She sighed.

"Tata?" Dikike said. "Is this boat for Chelu when he grows?" Her two-year-old brother, Chelu, peeked around his father's leg.

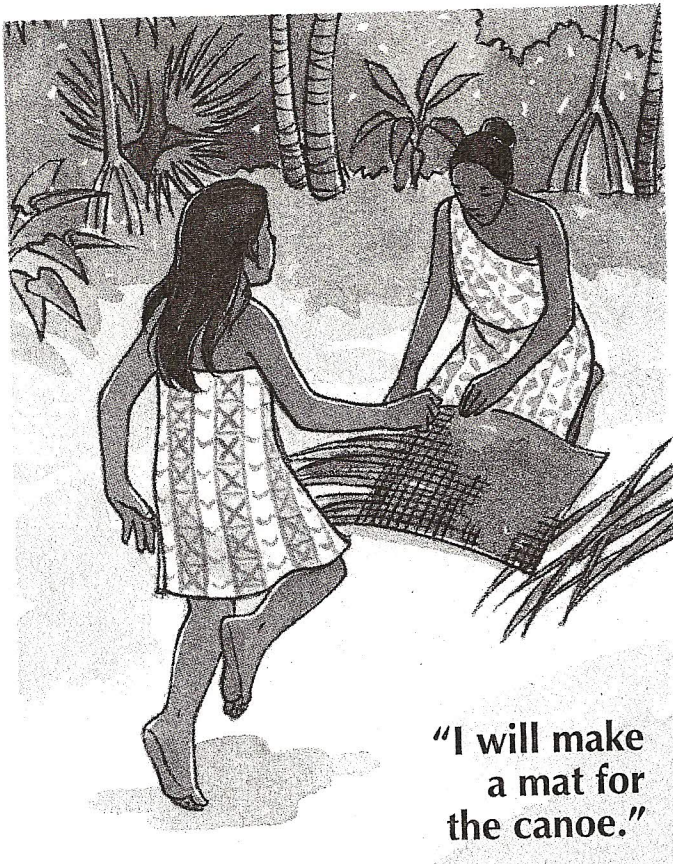
Tata would not answer.

"I think it is too big for him," Dikike said, trying to see her father's face. Deep ridges formed between his eyebrows as he painted the sides of the boat with glistening paint made from coconut oil. Dikike knew this would make the canoe sail faster. She saw herself flying out on the open water in her very own canoe, just like a smiling dolphin. "I think it is just my size," she said again.

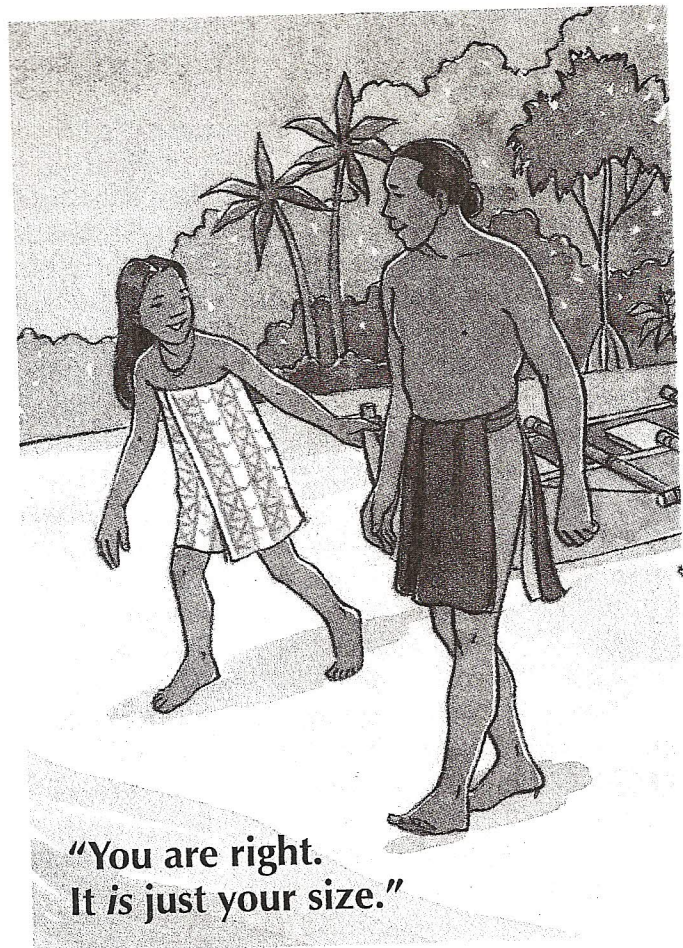
"What would a little girl do if the wind took her beyond the reef, where the waves crash down?" asked her father.

Dikike didn't like that question. Then she thought about what she had seen the boys do with their canoes in the calm lagoon. "I would tie a big stone to the boat so it would not sail beyond the reef," she said. Ridges formed between Dikike's small eyebrows. Who would use this boat, she wondered. Whoever it was, Tata was right. The boat did need a mat.

"I will make a mat for the canoe," she said. Dikike skipped over to her mother and sat down on the sand. Carefully, Dikike took the long ribbons of pandanus leaves. She wove them in and out and in and out until her mat was done.



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**"You are right.
It is just your size."**

Dikike placed the mat inside the canoe. The small carved canoe was finished. Dikike supposed it would make a wonderful gift for a little boy. On the island of Guahan, it was usually boys who fished in the sea.

Tata eyed his work with pride. He said, "You know, Dikike, you are right. It is just your size."

Dikike's mouth fell open. "You mean . . . ?"

"Yes," said Tata. "It is yours." He handed her a small wooden oar.

Dikike's hands slipped over the slim throat of the oar. It felt good in her hands. Happily, Dikike pulled her new canoe down to the lagoon, with her father walking at her side.